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INTERIM REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS ACTIVITIES OVER THE BIENNIUM 1984-1985

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment was held at ECA headquarters from 16 to 19 February 1984. At that Meeting, the Committee reviewed activities undertaken by its secretariat over the 1982-1983 period, identified areas of priority action on which future programmes and activities will be based and adopted resolution 4 (II): "Perspective on Human Settlements Activities during the Biennium 1984-1985."

2. In line with the institutional arrangements governing the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (resolution I(1) of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 358 (XIV), the report and resolutions adopted at the Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee were submitted to the Fifth Meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole that was held from 16 to 23 April 1984 in Addis Ababa.

3. The Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole considered the report and resolutions of the Joint Committee and submitted its comments and recommendations to the Tenth Meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers that was held also in Addis Ababa from 26 to 30 April 1984.

4. After considering the conclusions of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole, the Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 518 (XIX) entitled "Human Settlement" 1/.

5. In that resolution, the Conference of Ministers endorsed the report and resolutions adopted at the Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment and, among other things, recommended that co-operation should be strengthened among ECA, UNCHS, FAO, ILO, UNIDO and all non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations with a view to promoting human settlements activities in the African region.

6. The purpose of the present report is to provide a general view of the main activities undertaken by ECA in human settlements since the Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment was held in January 1984. The problems encountered in the implementation of the Committee's programme of activities as well as the efforts made to find solutions to them are also examined in this report.

II. PROGRESS REPORT

7. The activities undertaken by ECA secretariat in implementation of its work programme in the field of human settlements from the period beginning February 1984 and ending June 1985 focused on the following items:

- Physical planning;
- Development of construction and building material industries;
- Mechanisms for financing human settlements;

1/ See Annex I

- Popular participation in the construction of housing;
- Co-operation between ECA and international organizations within and outside the United Nations system.

A. Physical planning

(i) Training in human settlements

8. A series of activities have already been undertaken in the area of training. This was to complement activities already undertaken since the First Meeting of the Joint Committee which emphasized the primary importance of training the necessary personnel in the frrmulation and implementation of human settlements policies and programmes throughout the region. In this regard, a mission was sent to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Senegal to study the experiences of those countries in the training of manpower in physical planning. Also, a study on the improvement and development of human settlements training programmes in Africa was undertaken.

9. The aforementioned mission completed what had already been undertaken in six East and Southern Affican countries. The information gathered in the course of these missions, together with the conclusions of the meeting of the group of experts on regional institutions and mechanisms for training in human settlement convened by ECA, were used in publishing a technical paper.

10. The paper is divided into four distinct parts: (a) training needs in physical planning; (b) specific training programmes for providing construction capabilities in Africa; (c) popular housing, practices in urban planning and the adoptation of training establishments and programmes to the African context; (d) measures and proposals for developing training services and programmes in human settlements.

11. In the first part, it was emphasized that the training of African personnel in physical planning should not be carried out merely by transferring the pedagogical methods used in Europe, America or Asia to Africa. This was all the more important since the teaching had to meet the specific needs of the African countries and the training pattern to keep pace with the rapid development that African society required. The teaching was therefore to be adapted to the techniques and processes being used in the African region. Programmes were to be so geared as to train personnel that would be capable of building the structures necessary for development. Professional training generally required substantial resources. It was therefore advisable for the countries to show initiative in physical planning. The need to establish a close relationship between training and research would also make it possible to adapt training methods and programmes to local conditions.

12. The second part takes stock of the acute shortage of qualified technical personnel in the organized sector of constuuction in Africa and the difficulties encountered in striking a desirable balance among the three major categories of construction workers (staff, technicians and labourers). It also notes that technical expertise at all levels has not been sufficiently diversified to meet the qualitative needs of the industry. There was a lack of co-ordination among various establishments that trained various categories of building industry staff. Mention is also made of the need to institute training for people in the trades of carpentery, masonry, plumbing, painting, plastering and draughtsmanship. The programme aims at enabling them to improve their own skills and quality of work, and at providing them the technology appropriate to their trade.

13. The third part points out the importance of assessing the needs for the training of specialists and middle-level personnel in human settlements. It is also suggested that support should be given to the training of middle-level personnel and to project management and implementation teams so as to enable them to provide in-service training. They are also to be enabled to organize workshops on the problem of popular housing for low-income families living in urban areas. Research development programmes are not appropriately linked to training and briefing programmes and the preparation of programmes and training of trainers lags behind the structural changes occurring in the appropriate technology and proper management of human settlements.

14. The fourth part is devoted to measures and proposals that would develop human settlements services and programmes. The recommendations are built around four items: policy, planning and promotion; training of specialists and support personnel; popular housing and urban planning; and regional and international co-operation. Should they be implemented, these recommendations will no doubt bring about an improvement in human setllements services and training programmes.

(ii) Consideration of appropriate measures for the development of land policy

15. This study is one of the priority activities contained in resolution 4 (II) of the Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment. It was prepared on the basis of data collected in the Course of a mission to the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal and Niger as well as from responses received from 11 countries of the region to the questionnaire on the evaluation of the human settlements situation in Africa that ECA sent to all member countries.

16. Human settlements planning cannot be envisaged without eminent domain. The land policy should make for rational assignation of the uses to which land should be put. When the measures necessary for eminent domain are non-existent or inadequate, the speculation on land to be urbanized may hold back or prevent any development of human settlements.

17. The information collected to carry this study confirms that the cost of land is the main obstacle to the development of human settlements in most African countries. In spite of the genuine efforts made in this area, few countries have been able to formulate effective policies that allow enough land to be allocated for the construction of housing for low-income social groups.

(iii) Meeting of the Group of Experts

18. A meeting of experts on guidelines and indicators for developing country models on the application of a systematic spatial planning approach to national, subnational and local planning of human settlements and its integration into overall socio-economic planning was convened at ECA headquarters from 10 to 14 June 1984. That meeting of the Group of Experts came within the context of efforts that ECA was making to assist African countries to tackle more effectively their development problems, particularly those relating to the settlement and distribution of people within national economic and geographic spaces.

19. Six items were singled out to serve as a basis for the work of the meeting. The items were regrouped into three major themes, namely:

(a) Urban human settlements planning;
(b) Rural human settlement planning;
(c) Infrastructural planning.

20. Twelve experts from 11 countries and 10 observers were invited to participate in the Meeting and to submit papers on the aforementioned themes. These was done on the basis of their expertise in human settlements planning.

21. The outcome of the Meeting is expected to constitute a starting point for in-depth studies on the integration of human settlements planning into national socio-economic planning.

B. Development of construction and building materials industries

(i) Study for the development of decentralized systems of producing building materials in Africa

22. The objective of this study is to develop aspects of research in the construction materials industry. It is also to encourage and to assist African countries to increase their capacities with a view to promoting indigenous growth in the construction and building materials industry. Products from the construction materials industry cover wide sectors and are variously used in construction engineering as well as in the maintenance and renovation of existing structures not to mention the establishment of a local construction materials industry.

23. The development of a decentralized system for producing construction materials could help to improve the supply and distribution of building materials needed to build low-cost structures. Such development would also focus particular attention on the informal construction materials sector.

(ii) Reformulation of building codes and regulations

24. The reformulation of bullding rules and regulations is one major element of the ECA programme for developing building and construction materials industries. The objective is to secure the formulation and adoption of appropriate rules and regulations that can meet local needs for construction and encourage the local production and effective use of building materials (financing and insurance garantee).

25. Proposals serving as a practical basis for the formulation of new national rules and regulations in Eastern and Southern African countries were submitted to the March 1984 meeting of the Lusaka MULPOC Council of Ministers in Zambia. The proposals were accepted and ECA secretariat is going ahead with the study in order to work out a detailed model of building rules and regulations and modalities for their effective enforcement.

(iii) Promotion of research into building and construction materials

26. The project for the conversion of the Cacavelli Construction and Housing Centre in Lome, Togo, into a subregional construction and building materials research centre that would initially serve Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal and Togo has continued to retain the attention of ECA secretariat.

27. The five countries mentioned above have signed the documents on the project agreement and status of the new centre. ECA is making efforts to encourage other countries of the West African subregion to participate in the activities of the new subregional centre.

28. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has contributed $75,000 to the financing of the 1985-1986 programme of the Centre. The contribution made it possible to undertake consultative missions to the participating countries in order to prepare basic documents on the interim administrative arrangements for the 1985-1986 phase and the priority needs of member countries. The first meeting of the Governing Council was convened following that mission.

(iv) Advisory services

29. At the request of the Government of Tanzania, a study on the planning of decentralized systems for the production of construction materials was conducted in that country. The purpose of the study is to draw the attention of the country's decision-makers to the main factors that should be taken into account if plans and programmes for the development of local building materials industries are to achieve the expected results.

30. The study reviewed the approach adopted by the Government of Tanzania with regard to the development of the construction materials industry. It considered those sub-sectors that deserved particular attention and proposed solutions that the Government of Tanzania might adopt.

(v) Development of cement production in Africa

31. The importance of cement for the construction sector led African Heads of State and Government to emphasize the need for Africa to attain self-sufficiency in the production of this building material by the year 2000. The main purpose of the study was to assess the current situation in cement production and consumption, the way cement factories were run and their problems. Proposals were to the effect that more cement needed to be produced. Production in existing factories had to be optimized and the steps to achieve that were spelled.

C. Mechanisms for financing human settlements

32. During the period under review, the Government of Botswana received technical assistance in the financing of housing under a joint scheme involving ECA and the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat). UNCHS financed and sent one of its staff members seconded to ECA on mission to Botswana in August 1984. The mission was a follow-up of one mounted to that country in December 1983. It was organized for the purpose of leading a seminar on appropriate mechanisms for the financing of housing in Botswana. The basic document for the seminar was the report on technical assistance to that same country which had been prepared following the December 1982 mission.

33. The objective of this seminar was to bring together all financial institutions operating in Botswana to discuss the report of the expert and to prepare an action programme for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the reports. Representatives of 12 financial institutions attended the seminar. Among the items discussed were:

- Sources and the volume of funds for the proposed institution;
- Which financial institution in the housing sector could perform the functions proposed;
- The capacity of the Government of Botswana to implement the proposals;
- Technical assistance from United Nations agencies during the initial development phase.

34. The seminar ended with the preparation of a programme of action that was submitted to the Government of Botswana.

D. Guidelines and indicators for the production of co-operative housing, self-help housing and other forms of public participation

35. African countries are gaining an increasing awareness of the scope of the housing crisis particularly in the urban and peripheral areas. The people most affected by the housing problem are obviously the low-income people that constitute the vast majority in African towns.

36. The urgency and seriousness of this crisis in Third World countries in general, and in Africa in particular, were behind the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981 of resolution 36/71 which called for making 1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

37. The experiences of various African countries have shown that the production of conventional housing by the traditional sector has not contained the crisis because of the high cost of construction. Policies for co-operative housing, self-help housing and other forms of public participation however, seem to offer solutions appropriate to the housing situation in Africa.

38. The study proposes a dynamic approach to the problem by insisting on the need to promote such housing policies so that the African countries will go beyond the formal and usual framework of recommendations and find ways and means for effectively promoting co-operative housing, self-help housing and other forms of public participation.

39. Such promotion was to be made through administrative measures taken to create a generally favourable climate, the improvement of existing financing systems (as well as seek for other sources of financing), the production and use of local building material, the establishment of codes and technical rules for construction, the provision as a matter of preference, of services to housing co-operatives, staffing and training and popular participation.

E. Co-operation between ECA and other international organizations within or outside the United Nations system

40. Pursuant to resolution 4 (II) of the Second Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment and for the effective implementation of regional human settlements programmes, ECA secretariat has maintained contact with (UNCHS-Habitat). The work programme of each organization has been made known to the other so that the respective activities of the two organizations can be better harmonized.

41. As was pointed out in the preceeding chapter, ECA and UNCHS have jointly prepared and implemented a programme of technical assistance to the Government of Botswana that would improve housing financing schemes in that country.

42. In line with one of the arrangements relating to sessions of the Commission on Human Settlements. ECA was financed by UNCHS to participate in the seventh and eighth session of the Commission on Human Settlements held respectively in May 1984 at Libreville, Gabon and in May 1985 at Kingston, Jamaica. UNCHS was invited by ECA to participate in the meeting of the Group of Experts that ECA organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and which focused on guidelines and indicators for the integration of human settlements planning into national plans for economic and social development.

43. At the request of the centre for research and studies on construction and public works (CEBTP), ECA participated actively in the preparation of the African Regional Seminar on spontaneous and low-cost housing which will be organized by UNESCO, CEBTP and the Ethiopian Ministry of Urban Planning and Habitat from 18 to 21 November 1985 at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa. The seminar falls into the context of meetings on spontaneous and low-cost housing every other year in one African country. The basic theme of the seminar "Development of peri-urban housing and its integration into the urban Government". The objective is to provide an opportunity for all those working in spontaneous and low-cost housing to meet and to exchange views and experiences for the benefit of African countries.

44. Co-operation with the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been mainly confined to the identification of projects likely to be implemented jointly by ECA and ILO.

45. Co-operation between ECA and German Development Assistance for Social Habitat (DESWOS) was revitalized following the participation of that organization in the seminar that ECA organized on the impact of personal initiative, co-operative housing and other popular participation schemes on human settlements. A meeting was held at ECA with a representative of DESWOS to work out the modalities for co-operation. The idea of a technical assistance programme in which the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany would be involved was mooted. DESWOS has been asked to follow-up project with the authorities of the Federal Republic.

46. ECA had to get back to the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) in order to organize a joint seminar for French- and English-speaking African countries on new ways of financing housing construction for low-income people in Africa. A draft document was prepared by ECA and submitted to DSE for comments. The two organizations are continuing to exchange information on human settlements policies and programmes.

47. ECA has also maintained contact with the international congress of construction material experimentation and research laboratories (RILEM) of Paris for the implementation of a project to establish an African regional group of RILEM. The decision was taken at the Nairobi seminar on building and construction materials which was organized jointly by RILEM and CIB with the active participation of ECA.

F. Problems relating to the implementation of activities

48. The inadequacy of financial resources remains the main obstacle to the proper implementation of the activities of the secretariat of the Joint Intergovernmental Committee. The regular budget of the Human Settlement Section has been substantialy reduced and this obviously has had an impact on the possibilities of travel by staff members of the Section to collect the data required for implementing the work programme and providing adequate technical assistance to Governments upon request. Field missions are necessary since it is difficult to collect data by sending questionnaires. A case in point is the fact that only 11 responses were received to the questionnaire on the assessment of the human settlements situation. Banking on extrabudgetary resources remains an illusion, at least in so far as the human settlements sector is concerned. In budgetary appropriations for country programmes, none of the countries listed human settlements.

49. The programme for the development of building and construction materials industries which the section has been implementing since 1978 ended in April 1984. The United Nations Development Programme had stopped financing the programme and despite the efforts made by ECA secretariat, there have been difficulties in finding other sources of financing.

50. The manpower deficiency caused by the departure of two staff members working on the programme for the development of the building and construction materials industry has been made good by the arrival of two staff members recruited from the regular budget. These two staff members arrived only six months ago, which means that for most of the period covered by this report, the Section has been operating with very limited human resources.

51. One serious obstacle to the implementation of the resolutions on the human settlements programme adopted by the Joint Committee at its second meeting has been the lack of extrabudgetary resources. The Joint Committee is therefore invited to look very seriously into the question of mobilizing additional financial resources in order to enable the secretariat to operate more effectively.

518 (XIX) Human Settlements

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolutions 316 (XIII) of 1 March 1977 on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements, 358 (XIV) of 27 March 1979 on institutional arrangements for Human Settlements and 408 (XVI) of 10 April 1981 on the extension of the mandates of the above Intergovernmental Regional Committee to include environmental matters,

Further recalling resolution 8 (IV) of the fourth meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry of 26 November 1977,

Taking note of the General Assembly resolution 37/221 of 20 December 1982 on "International Year of Shelter for the Homeless",

Having examined the report 1/ of the second meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, held at Addis Ababa from 16 to 19 January 1984 and the resolutions adopted at the meeting,

Appreciating the activities undertaken by ECA for the development of building materials and construction industries,

Convinced that Housing and Construction needs remain a major constraint to the development efforts of all member States and that appropriate assistance should be given continuously to them in their endeavours to remove those constraints,

1. Endorses the report and resolutions adopted at the second meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment;

2. Urges member States to take steps to implement jointly with the ECA secretariat the specific actions defined in the resolutions adopted by the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment,

3. Calls upon member States in co-operation with the secretariat of ECA to take necessary steps for a full and successful participation of the African region in the activities of the "International Year of Shelter for the Homeless";

4. Recommends the strengthening of co-operation between the secretariat of ECA, UNCHS, FAO, ILO, UNIDO and all concerned NGOs and intergovernmental organizations in order to promote human settlements activities in the African region,

5. Requests the Executive Secretary of ECA to take the necessary steps to ensure satisfactory implementation of this resolution.

23rd meeting
26 May 1984

1/ E/ECA/HUS/ENV/2 or E/ECA/CM.10/13